

# The Highland Archaeology Challenge

## Site Record Sheet

Please complete a separate sheet for each site photographed

Site Name	SMR No. (if any)
CONGASH	NJ02 NE 0001
Site Type	Location / Grid Reference
GRAVEYARD: CHAPEL: STONE SYMBOL (CARVED)	NJ02 NE 1 0580 2622
Description, notes	
<p>Two Pictish Symbol stones were found in a small circular enclosure on Congash Farm, one on the east side of the entrance &amp; one on the west.</p> <p>No 1 is of blue gneiss, bears horseshoe &amp; elephant symbols</p> <p>No 2 is of blue gneiss, double disc &amp; Zrod, and an unusual symbol which looks like a helmet pierced by an arrow.</p> <p># Some people think it looks like Christ on the cross.</p> <p>Also footings of a chapel &amp; associated burial ground with stones from field clearance.</p>	
Details of photos: (continue overleaf in necessary)	Weather conditions etc
1 View of chapel	Dry, Spring day
2 View of Stone 1: elephant	
3 View of Stone 2: double disc + "Christ"	
	Sketch plan overleaf? Y/N
Your name and address:	Date:
John Halliday 54 Castlebr. Milton of Leys Inverness	30.9.03 01463-772041

All information supplied, including photographs, will be added to the Highland Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). This is a public record which is fully accessible for reference and research purposes. Selected photographs will be published on the World Wide Web and /or shared with other archaeology records. By taking part in the Challenge you agree to our doing this.

Please see Guidance Notes

**Congash Chapel & Pictish Symbol Stones, NJ02NE0001**

**Access Audit 104**

**Parish of Abernethy and Kincardine**

**Owner / Rep: S.C. Visser, c/o Mr W. Cruikshank, Edenmore Property, Culreach Mains, Grantown-on-Spey, PH26 3NH (01479 821377)**

**Local contact: Mr Cruikshank (as above)**

### Description

The site of an early Christian chapel, with two Class 1 Pictish sculptures of high quality, is located in an open field on Congash Farm, several miles east of Grantown (field currently under grazing). Since the compilation of the Access Audit the farm has changed hands and is now owned by a private individual (Mr S.C. Visser), not a tenant farmer. Mr Visser has been approached in writing, via Edenmore Property, but as yet (mid-January, 2000) there has been no reply from him. Until his attitude toward the site is known there is little point in proposing detailed plans for developing this site.

Another point to consider, many people have expressed the concern that this site (and many like it) would be ruined by being made more accessible. Its character, its significance to people, seems to lie in the ability to see it as an untouched place, remote, even difficult to find (though it is marked on the 1:50000 OS Landranger). These are the people who are interested enough to explore, to enquire at the farm if it is possible to cross over their land, thus negating car parks, waymarkers, access agreements. Some sites must be developed to give people easy access to the monuments and to the information. It would be elitist to deny this information to people who are interested to discover it but who aren't the sort to go hunting for it. Equally, some sites will be destroyed by development, and I think that this is one of them. It has two very significant sculptures associated with it, which, being feasibly portable, would be at risk if visitor numbers increased. However, left as they are the stones are open to damage. Recently, one was semi-excavated, without permission, to reveal the full design.

The chapel site itself is not well preserved. The enclosed area is filled with stones cleared off the surrounding field and there is no structural evidence for the chapel. (The chapel at Finlarig, Site 36, is better preserved so that the outline of the building is visible.) Rabbit damage within the enclosed area is severe and must be addressed soon. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and has been visited by Historic Scotland's monument warden, who is recommending remedial action to limit this process. It is interesting to note that most of the religious sites around here have an association with Pictish symbol stones (Inverallan, Finlarig, Congash, Kincardine).

### Pros

High quality Pictish sculpture

Good location

### Cons

No access agreement with landowner (January, 2000)

Potential to spoil the character of this site by developing it.

### Proposals

Prior to the farm changing hands the following was being proposed: (see Audit Report)

Parking at a disused gravel pit located immediately off the A95.

A path leading from here along the eastern edge of the field to a point opposite to the chapel site.

A fenced path leading across the field to the site, which would itself be fenced (rabbit proof) to prevent livestock from gaining access.

Interpretation material placed at the parking area or at the edge of the field opposite the chapel site - the site would benefit from graphical interpretation material as nothing can be seen of any chapel structure. (The cost of this development, including fencing, parking and interpretation, would be approximately £5000.)

However, if the new owner is not in agreement with this level of development then I suggest that little is done to disturb the location. This is already a special place for a significant number of people, who visit the site regularly. This site could be included in the proposed "Churches and Chapels" leaflet (see Insh, Site 238).

### Costs

**Historic Scotland should be responsible for any facilities to limit rabbit damage and potential threat to the symbol stones.**

**Inclusion in a churches and chapels leaflet**

### Bibliography